



Coconino National Forest
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NEWS RELEASE



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Public comments sought for Emory oak groves restoration project

SEDONA, Ariz., July 19, 2019 — In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act—and in partnership with the Yavapai-Apache Nation, Tonto Apache, San Carlos Apache, and White Mountain Apache tribes—the Coconino and Tonto national forests are seeking public input for the next 30 days on a proposal to restore culturally important Emory oak groves.

The proposed project identifies eight groves for restoration that cross Coconino, Yavapai, and Gila counties: seven on the Coconino's Red Rock Ranger District and one on the Tonto's Payson Ranger District. Project details can be found online at the following Forest Service website, and public comments must be received by August 18:
<https://tinyurl.com/EmoryOakRestoration>.

To mitigate losses of traditional importance to Western Apache people, tribal members have identified Emory oak groves located on Forest Service land to be considered for restoration treatments.

Site visits and assessments of the groves have determined there is a need to improve the health and vigor of the oak groves by removing non-desirable competing vegetation, re-introducing fire through broadcast burning, and fencing off areas to protect and increase seedling establishment from cattle grazing and recreation impacts.

Emory Oak grove restoration would be initially addressed through removal of non-desirable over-story and under-story species by hand thinning and/or mastication. Thinning activities would consist of hand falling trees and shrubs; the resulting slash would be lopped and scattered, hand piled, chipped, or masticated in place.

Potential actions at all eight locations include:

- Hand thinning (and potentially hand piled or chipped)
- Mastication
- Burning of hand piles or broadcast burning
- Fencing
- Direct seeding

This proposal is part of the Emory Oak Collaborative Tribal Restoration Initiative, which seeks to improve recruitment, increase resilience, and encourage conditions that favor acorn production of Emory oak trees for tribal use in order to ensure long-term persistence of this ecocultural resource.

Comment Submission: Please submit comments in writing, through one of several methods.

- Email: comments-southwestern-coconino-redrock@fs.fed.us (subject line “Emory Oak Restoration”).
- Regular mail: Coconino National Forest, Attn: Emory Oak Restoration, P.O. Box 20429, Sedona, AZ 86341.
- Fax: (928) 203-7539.
- Deliver in person: Red Rock Ranger District Office, 8375 state Route 179, Sedona, AZ 86351.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed action.

For technical questions regarding this restoration project, please contact Flagstaff District Silviculturist Andy Stevenson at andrew.stevenson@usda.gov or (928) 433-3861. For general questions, contact Red Rock Ranger District National Environmental Policy Act Planner Elizabeth Munding at elizabeth.a.munding@usda.gov or (928) 203-2914.

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